

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Hampton-Dumont Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Highland Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Highland Community School District received a 2000 Harkin grant totaling \$500,000 which was used to help build an addition to the middle school. This addition is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. The district also has received two fire safety grants totaling \$46,400 to install heat detectors, emergency lighting and make other repairs throughout the district. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Highland Community School District. In particular, I'd like to rec-

ognize the leadership of the board of education—Mike Roberts, Cindy Michel, Robert Schneider, Ed Ossman, Kevin Engel, Bruce Temple and Becky Hanson and former board members Teresa Greiner, Sandra Duwa, Denny Klein, Vaughn Davisson, Craig Slay and Rodney Cole. I would also like to recognize superintendent Chris Armstrong and former superintendent Carol Montz.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

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WASHINGTON COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and schoolboard members in the Washington Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Washington Community School District received a 2005 Harkin grant totaling \$500,000 which was used to upgrade all the facilities in the district including an addition to Stewart Elementary School. The district also received \$200,000 in fire safety grants since 2003 for a fire alarm system at the high school and repairs at Lincoln, Stewart and Washington schools. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Washington Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—Tim Orris, Patty Roe, Heidi Vittetoe, Deb Stanton, Eric Turner, Ron Goodwin, and Cathy Rich and former board members Jim Gorham and Vickie Reighard. I would also like to recognize superintendent Dave Schmitt.

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RECOGNIZING AMERICAN LEGION POST 75

● Mr. KOHL. Madam President, on July 19, 2008, American Legion Post 75 in Fond du Lac, WI, named its building in honor of James Megellas. James Megellas is one of Fond du Lac's favorite sons and this is indeed a fitting honor. I congratulate Post 75 and want to take a moment to honor James Megellas' service to our country.

Mr. Megellas was a student at Ripon College in Ripon, WI, when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Upon his graduation in 1942, he accepted an ROTC commission as a second lieutenant in the infantry and shortly thereafter faced